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ABSTRACT

Both comprehensive and long-range educational planning are discussed in this paper. Comprehensive planning begins with the identification of the district's mission. This mission generates a set of continuing objectives that aim toward the completion of specific end-dated objectives. The comprehensive plan must take into account the educational needs of the entire community. Program budgeting enables comprehensive planners to select appropriate strategies for meeting objectives. To achieve accountability, the plan must also include monitoring, evaluation, and reporting. Long-range educational planning involves establishing a planning cycle spanning several years. In the first year the database is updated and needs are assessed. In the second year the plan is revised and annual program plans and budgeting are developed. The third year brings review and completion of the 5-year plan. Implementation begins in the fourth year and evaluation follows in the fifth. The planning office should include a professional planner placed directly under the superintendent and supported by a skillful staff. The planning office should work independently of but in close coordination with those charged with program operations. All elements of the community affected by education should be involved in the planning process. (PGD)

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Planning Framework and Reference: Wash. Co. Sch. Dist. #1, Worland, WY written by Bruce C. Perryman, Curriculum Facilitator; a guide to future planning events, actions, sequence, etc. 8-21-84.

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

"THE FUTURE ISN'T WHAT IT USED TO BE!"

OR

Long-Range Planning in our Local School Systems Holds the Key

Although this paper will adequately describe my own position on long-range planning, let me state at the outset that I am strongly committed to the process of planning, that I cannot understand how anyone can perform his responsibilities as an educational administrator without clear-cut planning and that it is, in my view, essential that educational planning be conducted within the framework of a total plan for education in a local school system.

Planning is not new. I suppose Columbus did some planning before he crossed the ocean. He had an objective, he developed some strategies, and he probably even prepared a budget. The language of planning has changed. In yester-year we talked about PPBS, PERT, management by objectives, forecasting, systems analysis and cost-effectiveness. Today we talk of such things as school based management, omni-educational preciseness, etc. These are but some of the tools of planning. They are part of the method and process.

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Today I will go well beyond the basic assignment, (long-range and/or strategic planning for local school systems) which as I interpret it, could have been little more than that of a commentator on the administrator's role in total planning. Rather than merely talk about the niceties of cooperation with the constituencies involved, I have chosen to move into a discussion of the process of planning as well as the importance of involvement versus separatism. In addition, I will propose a system and process for educational planning which can be useful and effective within a larger planning system.

I shall, as well, shift away from the word, "total" and use the word, "comprehensive" and "systematic" in disucssing planning for education at our local level school systems. Comprehensive gives me the feeling of a more inclusive, overarching consideration of direction and consequence. It will be particularly important in dealing with a defense of integrating school-districts educational planning within the broader system of community/ education planning K-12.

In building a rationale for education at the local level as a part of comprehensive planning, I will make the assumption that we all accept the basic premise that planning is essential. I realize that our commitment to planning is varied. That some view it as a chore, others as a waste of time, most are resigned to the fact that we will need to plan, some will plan because they believe that it is our only salvation. Whatever your view, planning is here to stay -- so we might just as well do it in the most effective way possible.

In order to begin, there is need to look at typical educational planning compared to comprehensive long-range planning. To do this, we might ask ourselves some questions. If the answers are yes to the second alternatives I will list -- then you are moving into comprehensive planning.

1. Is the planning haphazardly incomplete with everyone "planning" or is there a separate staff with clearly identified responsibilities for coordinating planning?

2. Is the planning solution-oriented or goal-oriented?

3. Is the approach a piece-meal, patchwork arrangement or is each problem viewed within the context of the whole system?

4. Do you use "seat-of-the-pants" planning or are systematic processes applied to the planning activity?

5. Are solutions to the problem the boss's (or school board's) favorite program or are several alternative solutions displayed and compared in order to make decisions?

6. Is the plan concerned only with the next year or is it long-range (strategic -- say five years at minimum, 10-20 most likely) containing quantified objectives?

7. Is the planning based on the need for new funds, needs assessment, Board directive to add on programs or is there a review of present activity to determine if there can be adjustments and realignment?

8. Is planning done within a fixed budget frame or are the needs of the school district with respect to program requirements the basis for planning with financing a secondary concern?

9. Is planning a separate activity for each major program in the district or does planning start with an overall mission and objectives for the school system's total educational program?

A former high official in the U.S. Dept. of Education once said, " Planning is ... attending to the goals we ought to be thinking about and never do, the facts we do not like to face and the questions we lack the courage to ask."

In terms of comprehensive planning, some of the questions might be: (1) What do you see to be the nature of society 20-30 years from now? (2) What attributes and skills will people need to live in this society (what will constitute functional literacy by the year 2000)? (3) What kind of schools, plan of instruction, curriculum should be created to give people the attributes and skills to live in this society? (We are talking about your communities specifically and society in general here.)

To a great extent, comprehensive planning must start with such questions related to the long term future of education in a given school district. Obviously, it is not possible with any expertise or infinite wisdom to answer these questions with specifics. It is, however, possible from such questions to establish a framework within which a program structure for comprehensive planning emanates. The program structure must begin with fundamentals, and such fundamentals include a statement of the mission of the school district with respect to the educational program in the district and a set of continuing objectives which relate to the major concern expressed in the mission statement.

The mission statement is the broadest, most comprehensive statement that can be made about central or continuing purpose. It is a description of the chief function or responsibility of an organization. It justifies continuing support of the organization by society, and it provides initial direction for the management or administration of the organization. It is the purpose of the mission statement to provide a focus for the resources of the organization. It is clearly a statement of "what" rather than the "who," "how," or "when."

As a part of the fundamental base for a comprehensive plan, the mission statement is usually supported by a set of continuing objectives. These objectives are amplifications of the mission statement and form the basis for a set of specific objectives. Continuing objectives are the kind which do not have a time frame but are essentially futuristic and remain as long as the mission of the school system remains unchanged.

Specific objectives with a time frame are a direct outgrowth of the continuing objectives. It is from the specific objectives that a program structure for planning is devised. Program structure itself is the first essential in determining the way in which a comprehensive plan is developed. It is here where great caution must be exercised within an educational system. Because program structure is usually built in a way which treats long-range objectives and all that follows from the point of view of groups of people to be served or the levels of education programs, it is sometimes necessary to ignore the traditional organizational structure of a given school system. While most school district structures are built against the stratification of levels of program, such as elementary, middle school (Jr. H.S.), high school, or adult, it is advantageous, from a comprehensive planning point of view, to arrange the program structure on the basis of a concern for students.

When program structure, for example, starts with major program areas for the general student population, the handicapped, etc., it is quite evident that as long-range objectives, strategies, tasks and work plans are developed to achieve overall goals for each group of students, the typical organizational structure of a school system may disappear. This, in itself, is a traumatic experience for tight local school systems, traditional empires, and vested interests. As a former N.Y. State Commissioner of Education said in a speech to a group several years ago, "Mission oriented planning....unsettles the familiar, disturbs organizational serenity, induces tensions, creates conflicts, and results in some social cost. ... usual fixed lines of authority are broken and neat areas of responsibility are made ambiguous; some personnel cannot adjust." I alert you to this particular problem because it is conceivable that school district education or any other major unit can become a single strategy (a way of meeting a specific objective) within the program structure rather than being completely identifiable as a separate component.

This does not disturb me, for I believe that school district education is in a stronger position to grow and flourish when it can be demonstrated that it is a contributing factor or force in achieving a set of comprehensive objectives for the people of a given community.

Again the former N.Y. Commissioner has stated, "It is my deepest belief that planning for the local school district's education plan must be done as an integral part of the total system of education and not as a separable unrelated part. There must be clear relationships between all facets of education. In fact, it would seem difficult to me to see how a school system could develop a long-range plan for education without having a fundamental long-range plan for the total program of education in the community/district.

I believe that educators would be in a stronger position in obtaining positive public sentiment for financial support as well as educational commitment when it can be clearly demonstrated that education is part and parcel of the total perceived system. When planning for education fits within the program structure of a comprehensive plan and becomes a clear component in the system designed to serve all people, we are in a stronger position to obtain the kind of support necessary for education.

If the comprehensive plan is directed toward people/students and their needs and requirements and is developed with true honesty and integrity, it becomes obvious that preparation for the future is a long term benefit for people. When priorities are developed in a manner which is directed at people/students, there is a significant portion of the population which will require increased preparation for skills of the future. When alternative solutions are proposed to meet the needs of special groups of students (i.e., gifted and talented, special education, college bound, vocational education, etc.) again education can come to the forefront.

If comprehensive planning works as it should within a school system, decision makers are faced with a review of alternative solutions to achieving long term objectives. Within the system of comprehensive planning, these decisions cannot be made on a subjective biased basis, but rather on the facts of the case. When financial resources are limited and hard choice must be made among strategies to meet needs of people/students, the strong case for specific aspects of education receiving its equitable share of financial resources becomes more certain.

Comprehensive school district planning has many advantages each of which has a benefit for educational planning in general: when it is conducted within the context of total planning. Some of these include:

1. An identification and analysis of the current status of the student population, its characteristics and other factors which are needed as a base for planning (current curriculum map for example). School distirct education can benefit from such a complete analysis in that it is possible to identify the total extent of need for educational programs based on total student characteristics, community needs assessment, current curriculum map, strategic projection of community values, resources, and educational program; taking into account that portion of the student population handled by other program areas. A clearer identification of gaps in the system of education become apparent when they are viewed from this vantaged point.

2. Comprehensive planning identifies common goals and objectives for all. In basing school district planning on these kinds of common goals and objectives, education is placed within a stronger perspective and becomes clearly identified as a means of meeting objectives directed at specific groups of people/students (communities).

3. Comprehensive planning tends to eliminate overlapping and duplication of programs conceivable operated in separate empires. It brings to the surface unprofitable programs which may not be making significant contributions toward meeting long-range objectives. From the point of view of educational planning, the review and analysis process which sorts out specific program plans assures that a centrality for the administration of education is effected.

4. Because comprehensive planning identifies alternate routes to achieve specific outcomes, there is greater possibility for plugging the programs of specific components of education into the set of alternatives for dealing with groups of people/students, thereby establishing stronger justifications for the continuation and expansion of preparation for society of the future.

Before someone gets the idea that comprehensive planning and long-range planning for education consist solely of collecting data and establishing objectives, permit me to remind you that comprehensive planning, whether it be across the board in a school district or specifically within a given school (elementary, middle, or high school), has as an important component, the budgeting process. Program budgeting is where the chips are laid on the line. This is where hard decisions are made in selecting strategies from a set of alternatives. This is where decisions concerning the extent to which objectives can be met within a particular time frame come home to roost.

Although dollars are secondary in terms of identifying or assessing need and preparing a plan to meet the needs of people within a school system, they become eminently important in that portion of the planning process where budget determinations must be made.

When costs are initially applied to program plans, the process is based on meeting objectives in the most optimal manner. As frequently happens, however, funds needed are far in excess of funds available to implement plans. Effective program budgeting gives decision-makers hard choices to make. It requires the decision-maker to decide first among major program proposals (establishing priorities) and decide whether a whole program will go by the boards in favor of something with a much higher priority. It permits the decision-maker to study a display of alternative lengths of time to achieve a particular objective. For example, if the optimum strategy for achieving a particular program objective costs $500,000 and the decision-maker concludes that $300,000 is all that can be applied to that program area in a particular budget year, he must have full knowledge of the consequences, he must be told the extent to which the program objective must be reduced in quantity or in quality in order to stay within the available dollars identified.

Program costs, incidentally, must be built on all cost factors including such things as school district staff costs as well as maintenance and operation costs related to implementing the program.

I should mention at this point one more aspect of comprehensive planning which if left out makes the plan just a stack of paper. This aspect concerns monitoring, evaluation and reporting. It is here where accountability takes on great significance.

Accountability in this framwork means taking full responsibility for what is in the comprehensive plan, to publicly explain what has happened based on programs proposed, to identify weaknesses as well as strengths, to proposed adjustments to overcome lack of achievement and to assure wider implementation of successes.

To be accountable means that you are willing to answer publicly two basic questions: Have the funds allotted been spent for the purposes delineated in the plan, and what was accomplished because of the expenditures made?

In my view, monitoring is an internal process which an administrator performs in order to assess continuous progress toward meeting objectives to which he is committed. It means of course taking personal responsibility for decision making and direction. It is to an extent "self-protection." It is the administrator's tool used to review where he has been,what he is doing and what must still be done to meet specified objectives.

To some degree, evaluation is similar to monitoring, except that it is performed at specified intervals (as compared to continuous monitoring). The intervals are much related to the planning and budgeting process. Evaluation serves as a check or assessment of accomplishment in order to make decisions regarding expansion, contraction or elimination of programs; adjustment in pace toward meeting objectives and future resource allocations for programs in the plan.

One comment needs to be made with respect to the form of evaluation as a part of comprehensive planning as compared to program analysis and review. Evaluation of achievements in comprehensive planning does not require standard and exact research techniques. It is more a hard-nosed process of asking "Did you or didn't you and if not why not?" It is management oriented review rather than scientific study of the effects of program activity.

If accountability is taken seriously, then reporting takes on a new and important role. It is the way in which the several constituencies learn about accomplishments and further needs. It is the public statement of a school district's stewardship of program funds. It should contain such items as the characteristics of the student population served, a follow-up of completors of programs, the extent to which goals have been met and a display of what must still be accomplished.

However, one caution should be observed. Reporting must be purposeful in relation to the objectives and program activities in the comprehensive plan. It cannot be a set of disjointed statistics of questionable value to some other school system or level of bureaucracy. Reporting must be consistent with the program structure of the plan itself.

With the hope that I have developed sufficiently a rationale and justification for the inclusion of comprehensive educational planning at the school district level, I would like to shift to a discussion of a model for long-range planning in education. I cannot take credit for the design. It was developed by an extremely creative and competent planning staff (a unit I will describe in more detail later) based on three significant factors.

The first deals with school district planning wherein the PPBS system is part and parcel of each distirct's annual budget cycle. Responsibility for the educational portion of the program structure is vested in the mutually cooperative effort of program specialists and the curriculum office. The program structure contains a matrix built on groups of students and levels of program.

The second factor relates to the incompatibility of a given state format for a specific plan with the state's interests. In order to deal with preparation of the school district's program plan and the state interests for education in a coordinated way (particularly since the time frame for completion of both overlap), it is essential that they be compatible. A consistent pattern permits preparation of both plans simultaneously and also allows for a close relationship between them.

The third factor relates to the present incompatibility between what is known as planning guidelines. Under many formats, it is entirely possible to write a long-range plan which looks at first glance like a carefully developed program with meaningful objectives and indication of significant progress through the five-year cycle. At the same time, it is possible to prepare the annual plan to permit expenditures for the development and maintenance of traditional programs and to satisfy vested interests. The many designs do not permit a clear display of internal consistency between long-range plans and annual program plans.

While this was the essential rationale for designing a new format, the most basic reason relates to the fact that the present school district plan outline mixes apples and oranges. More specifically, it mixes groups of students and levels of programs on the same program structure plane. This occurs because the design was based not on program planning concepts but on the way the law or other lack of planning was writtten with respect to the several purposes. In addition, the design places on the same program structure plane, along with groups of students and levels of program, items which are more properly classified as activities. Examples are guidance and counseling, research, curriculum planning, etc.

I'd better explain what I mean; I said earlier that a comprehensive plan requires a program structure which uses groups of students or program levels as a base for identifying major purposes. This would mean that major purposes (or program areas) could be population groups such as adults, students in grades 9-12, students in grades 5-8, students in grades K-4, or they could be program levels such as elementary, middle school, high school, etc. If groups of students are chosen as major purposes then the levels of program become a set of subpurposes under each major purpose.

I should mention that preceeding the long-range plan and annual program plan and budget is a major section which describes an assessment of local economic conditions, community values, population data, educational program, resources, as well as information with respect to the current status of the educational program in the district (a curriculum map if you will).

As important to understanding the model itslef, is the way in which it is built, the sequence of events required to complete it and the staffing and involvement of persons concerned with the plan. When monitoring, evaluation and reporting are added into the planning cycle (and they are essestial, for reassessment and adjustment must be based on these matters) planning becomes a year-round job. Let me try to sequence the planning cycle:

* Year one (1) --- update and revise base data (curriculum mapping,etc.) conduct needs assessment studies, long-range planning study.

* Year One (1) --- assess areas of need and priorities. There must be involvement of a broad based community group and staff concerned with improving education as well as a check point with a curriculum coordinating council and school board.

* Year two (2) --- up-date (propose a five year plan for strengthening and improving) the long-range plan, based on assessment of needs, long-range study committee and curriculum map dovetailing, comparison, gap review, etc.

* Year two (2) --- prepare projected annual program plan and budget. There needs to be a check point here with the program development staff, the curriculum coordinating council, and the school board.

* Year three (3) (beginning of year three) --- conduct review of the total plan with concerned administrative staff as well as with external groups. Conduct a required public hearing. The draft five-year plan should be reviewed with the curriculum coordinating council and the board of trustees.

* End of year three --- complete the five year plan in final form. Two check points should be observed: one with the curriculum coordinating council, the second requires approval of the school board.

* Year four (4) --- begin implementation of the proposed five year plan. Assign tasks to specific operating units and build work plans for the accomplishment of objectives.

* Year five (5) --- begin assessment of the previous year. prepare the annual report and data for the curriculum coordinating council and school board.

I would hope that the description of the planning cycle demonstrates the need for school districts to review present staffing arrangements and where necessary consider a reorganization or additions to the staff. It is my judgement, and our experience, that a full-time planning/curriculum person (function) is a necesssity if educational planning at the district level is to be done effectively and if we are to achieve a coordination with comprehensive planning for an entire school district. Admittedly smaller districts may not have the resources to justify this suggestion. Therefore the burden falls squarely on the Superintendent's shoulders to do with all of his other responsibilities. Usually his priorities and expertise direct his energy unfortunately and the idea of comprehensive planning falls aside in the shuffle.

It must be remembered as well that a planning staff cannot plan in isolation. There must be complete involvement of all persons who have a concern for implementing plans that have been developed. This means that principals, department heads, program developers and subject specialists as well as persons in related areas such as facilities planning, adult education, guidance and research must be brought into the review and development stages of planning. All of this can be coordinated by a small permanent staff specifically identified for planning.

In the model described, the staffing pattern is a simple one. It consists at present of only one professional. He functions as a lead planner/curriculum facilitator whose rank is second only to the Superintendent and is directly responsible to the superintendent, he/she must be an educational planner whose concern is curriculum, program structure, and objectives, one who is responsible for coordinating development of information regarding assessment of need, forecasting community conditions, estimating costs of activities and preparing reports. The planning/curriculum office is supported in these activities by others whose functions relate to the specific categories of planning activity just described. This small staff also provides planning/curriculum services for line operating units within the district i.e., elementary, middle school and high school.

I am compelled to express a belief regarding qualifications of planning/curriculum staff for school districts. While the administrator and educational planner should have experience in and an understanding of K-12 public education, it is more important that they have expertise in the planning process, interpersonal skills, and sufficient experience dealing with outside constituencies such as school boards, community civic groups, resource people, state education department staff, etc. It is understood that internally this person should be adept at interpersonal skills relating to conducting district business with teachers, principals, and other staff. This staff should be energetic, bright, creative, and flexible.

It should be obvious that staff such as that described cannot do more than provide central coordination of the planning/curriculum effort. To some extent it is a service office to operating units, providing information as well as analysis and assessment of program activity for the Superintendent and school board.

One digression emerges at this point. It relates to staff organization in a school system. If any of you are contemplating a reorganization of staffing along the lines of what I have outlined -- my humble advice is "Think about it."

The functions of a given school district differ somewhat significantly from those of ours or any other. School districts have a responsibility for program development at the local level. Tayloring to fit individual local needs is the responsibility of the superintendent.

Let me return to the specifics of planning for local school district education. No discourse of this kind would be complete without reporting on procedures for implementing a plan.

I said earlier that planning cannot be done in isolation, that it must involve the operating units (schools) and program developers (teachers, principals). It is a well known axiom that a plan developed by one group will not be reasonably implemented by another group. Involvement in the process of planning by all concerned parties is essential. The planning/curriculum staff is responsible for seeing that a plan is developed and periodically assist with assessment of accomplishments.

Planning staff, too, should not have responsibilities which overlap those of program developers and operating units. In other words, it should not have operating functions assigned to it. It is, in the strictest sense, an internal unit with an emmissary relationship from the school superintendent as opposed to an adivsory responsibility. Clarification of functions eliminates the possibility of civil war between major divisions in the district i.e., schools, departments, etc.

The mere completion of the basic plan is not the end of the road. It is in the implementation of accepted objectives wherein the pay-off lies.

To do this requires as much planning as the basic plan itself. Specific activities identified in the annual program plan and budget must be translated into tasks, each of which is assigned to an operating unit (individual school, principal, department, etc.) Overall responsibility for action must be vested in an administrator. Task administrators, under the supervision of the planner/curriculum person, must be assigned. The task administrator has a basic responsibility to work with teachers as well as other operating personnel in assuring completion of activities delineated in the school budget. A task administrator is essentially a coordinator, particularly when the activity for which he is responsible cuts across operating unit lines -- such as a special education or gifted and talented programs.

Task administrators and operating units are responsible for preparing work plans for each activity to be carried out. This process is essential if objectives are to be met and funds are to be expended for the purposes for which they were allotted.

Work plans specify the action to be taken, the staff required, what each person will do, how long it will take and what it will cost in staff time, travel, and other maintenance costs. Actual costs can be determined to carry out each activity. Internal administrative budgets are built and justified on the basis of unit work plans.

"Seat-of-the-pants" implementation of a comprehensive plan is eliminated with this process. Eliminated, too, is the usual tendency to over inflate an operating unit budget to protect it from arbitrary cuts at a higher level.

Planning in school systems are part of the total process of comprehensive planning, whether it be for all of education within a given community or a specific plan of education for a given program (i.e., adult, gifted and talented, vocational, college bound, etc.). Time constraints prevent a complete and lengthy discussion of this aspect.

There is one last matter to talk about. Up to now, this paper has dwelled on comprehensive planning within a school system and some of the specifics with respect to educational planning.

I call to your attention that regardless of structure for education within a school district each of us is part of a larger enterprise. It is this enterprise -- community, state, as a whole -- which has significant impact on our destiny.

Ultimate responsibility for budgets and appropriation of funds rests with the local taxpayers, the legislature, the Governor, and most assuredly the local school boards. The competition for funds is intense, th trade-offs frequent.

It is particularly prudent, therefore,that close cooperation and coordination be effected with those groups that have a bearing on the program plans for education -- and most particularly education at the local level. It is most important that inputs from Chambers of Commerce, Social Services, civic groups, business and professional groups, etc. be utilized in the development of comprehensive plans.

In a community where all interested parties participate in comprehensive planning -- where program budgeting is a way of life, all the expertise that can be mustered is essential in order that education plans not be subordinated in the schedule of priorities.

All the necessary techniques -- effectiveness measures, needs assessment studies, evaluation, cost-benefit reports, must be used to create a climate of urgency in the total plans of the school district in order for the education program to compete in a sometimes unfriendly world. The future is not what it used to be.

I have taken liberties with the parameters of my assignment during this presentation. I find that opportunities to present a viewpoint with respect to a process for long-range educational planning at the district level are sometimes few and far between, that one's concerns must be aired and position must be clarified.

Someone said some time ago, "An imperfect past does not excuse an imperfect present, but a knowledge of past realities and past mistakes is critical if we are to avoid the same mistakes twice."

It is my hope that there is developed within the period ahead a better climate of cooperative effort between the local school district and the State Dept. of Education, that greater flexibility and freedom are given to the schools in our state, for we are on the hot seat, we are the ones who are accountable directly for results with people, that our efforts are supported with enthusiasm, that true assistance is given when we need it, that the process of groveling in the quagmire of minutia and detail is terminated, that we are viewed as mature, knowledgeable and responsible people with some expertise of our own, that a global review of our school system's plans is conducted with a view toward praise and encouragement and that for all time microscopic inspection of the "ants" is eliminated.

Machiavelli, in the 15th century, said, "There is nothing more difficult of success, nor more dangerous to handle, than to initiate a new order of things."

Nothing good comes easily, but with time, encouragement, help, and understanding; true and effective results will be evident.

Let me close with a delightful fable which I consider most appropriate to the occasion. It is found in the preface to Robert Mager's book, "Preparing Instructional Objectives."

Once upon a time a Sea Horse gathered up his seven pieces of eight and cantered out to find his fortune. Berfore he had traveled very far he met an Eel, who said,

"Psst. Hey, bud. Where 'ya goin'?

"I'm going out to find my fortune," replied the Sea Horse, proudly.

"You're in luck," said the Eel. "For four pieces of eight you can have this speedy flipper, and then you'll be able to get there a lot faster."

"Gee, that's swell," said the Sea Horse, and paid the money and put on the flipper and slithered off at twice the speed. Soon he came upon a Sponge, who said,

"Psst. Hey, bud. Where 'ya goin'?

"I'm going out to find my fortune," replied the Sea Horse.

"You're in luck," said the Sponge. "For a small fee I will let you have this jet-propelled scooter so that you will be able to travel a lot faster."

So the Sea Horse bought the scooter with his remaining money and went zooming through the sea five times as fast. Soon he came upon a Shark, who said,

"Psst. Hey, bud. Where 'ya goin"?

"I'm going out to find my fortune," replied the Sea Horse.

"You're in luck. If you'll take this short cut," said the Shark, pointing to his open mouth, "you'll save yourself a lot of time."

"Gee, thanks," said the Sea Horse, and zoomed off into the interior of the Shark, there to be devoured.

The moral of this fable is that if you're not sure where you're going, you're liable to end up someplace else -- and not even know it.

The END!!

BCP/oyw